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NEWS RELEASE

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OHS Holds Checkpoint Strikeforce Officer Recognition Ceremony
Campaign credited with 10% reduction in state's alcohol-related traffic deaths

Dover – On Thursday, law enforcement officers from police agencies statewide were recognized for their participation in the 2006 “Checkpoint Strikeforce” campaign with an awards ceremony at the Dover Sheraton. “Checkpoint Strikeforce” is a multi-state crackdown on impaired drivers aimed at deterring impaired driving and arresting DUI offenders.

At the ceremony, Office of Highway Safety Director Trish Roberts and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Regional Administrator Dr. Elizabeth Baker thanked the officers for their unwavering commitment and dedication to taking impaired drivers off Delaware roads. Department of Safety and Homeland Security Secretary David B. Mitchell added his gratitude as he brought greetings from Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner.

“We are extremely grateful for the work that you do as part of this campaign,” said Governor Minner. “Your commitment to this effort is literally saving lives we appreciate all you do to protect the people of Delaware.”

Now entering its sixth year, *Checkpoint Strikeforce* has grown into a year-round campaign with the bulk of the enforcement conducted in the form of weekly sobriety checkpoints between July and December and less frequent monthly checkpoints from January through June.

A new feature of this year's initiative was adding DUI saturation patrols in outlying areas to run in conjunction with the checkpoints. During the six-month DUI enforcement blitz period, 618 people were arrested for Driving Under the Influence of alcohol and/or drugs. OHS officials said this is the first time since the campaign began in 2002 that the DUI arrest numbers decreased...and they are pleased.

“This is a clear indication that people are responding to the high visibility enforcement strategy,” said OHS Director Tricia Roberts. “In short, fewer people are drinking and driving because they know you’re out there waiting for them.”

OHS officials also point to the success of the campaign as a primary reason why alcohol-related traffic deaths in Delaware declined by nearly 10% last year. In 2006, 53 (or 36%) of 147 traffic fatalities were alcohol-related compared to the 45% of all traffic deaths that were alcohol-related in 2005. Additionally during the July through December campaign period alone, officials saw alcohol-related deaths drop by an astounding 44% to 29% of all traffic deaths.

During the campaign, officers also arrested 146 wanted individuals, recovered 9 stolen vehicles, made 231 drug arrests along with 132 felony arrests, and issued 112 underage drinking citations. Secretary David Mitchell said that the additional arrests are a shining example of why traffic enforcement *is* law enforcement.

“You’re not only accomplishing this campaign’s primary goal of removing impaired drivers from the roads – and these are people who pose an immediate threat to the safety of others – but also by arresting individuals who pose additional threats, sometimes deadly threats, to the citizens of our state.”

A total of 321 officers from 31 police agencies participated in the 2006 campaign.

Each participating agency received a plaque for its participation in the campaign, and while all officers received a certificate in recognition of their participation in the initiative, several officers received specially designed awards for outstanding participation. The leaders of the county DUI Task Forces were also recognized for outstanding leadership. The task force leaders are: Sussex County – Chief Ken McLaughlin, Ocean View PD; Kent County – Cpl. Todd Michelau, Felton P.D and Sgt. Jeff David, Milford P.D.; New Castle County Chief Michael Capriglione, Newport P.D.

Special certificates of recognition were also presented to University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Agents Cindy Genau and Mike Love, and Trish Bachman of MADD Delaware for assisting the DUI Task Forces as outstanding volunteers.

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